Ministry of Agriculture

Farm & Food Report

Communications Branch, Walter Scott Building
3085 Albert Street, Regina, Canada, S4S 0B1

Saskatchewan

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Log Number: 08-15-64
Week of April 7, 2008

EXPO SHOWCASES INNOVATION AND EDUCATES PUBLIC

The Western Canadian Livestock Expo, held April 16-17 in Saskatoon at Prairieland Park, showcases the latest in technology and genetics for both dairy and pork producers. It is also an opportunity for exhibitors to expand their marketing networks. Meanwhile, producers have the ability to investigate new products and services to enhance their operations. The show involves show ring competitions, a tradeshow, social events and a youth education program.

"One of the highlights is always the purebred show," said Brenda Sapergia, Livestock Manager with Saskatoon Prairieland Park Corporation. "We have both a Jersey and a Holstein show, as well as a Super Cow competition, which involves judging in both production and conformation. We have a full line-up of youth classes as well."

Categories for the Jersey and Holstein show include Showmanship, Conformation and Futurity classes. Prize money ranges up to $500 for the winner of the Super Cow competitions.

Aggregate awards are also offered to the Premier Breeder for the highest total of points collected based on a maximum of 10 females from the breeding unit. The Premier Exhibitor is the showperson with the highest point total collected from a maximum of 10 females. The Herdsman Award provides recognition for the best display, taking into consideration the neatness of the area, public interaction and co-operation with the organizing committee.

A late addition to the event's agenda will be of interest to the pork industry. Sask Pork will be running a seminar on the Transport Quality Assurance ™ Certification Program, which is designed specifically for the producers, handlers and transporters of pigs. There is no charge for the seminar, but pre-registration is required. Contact Harvey Wagner with Sask Pork at (306)244-7752 to pre-register or for more information about the seminar.

The tradeshow is also a highlight of the Western Canadian Livestock Expo. This year's edition will feature more than 80 booths, with exhibitors arriving from coast to coast. The tradeshow provides the opportunity for industry suppliers and producers to interact. Most booths showcase equipment, supplies and services.

As part of a community outreach initiative, the School Visit Program is offered twice a day in the morning and afternoon. Approximately 600 grade five students from Saskatoon and the surrounding area attend the show. The purpose is to build awareness of the dairy and pork industries.

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A tour guide shows students through five 15-minute stations. The stations include The Processing of Milk and Milk Products, Milking Parlour, The Dairy Cow's Diet, Nutritional Aspects of Dairy Products, and Pork Production Today.

The Western Canadian Livestock Expo provides a broad range of opportunities to producers and the public. There is no admission charge. The public is welcome to attend.

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NUTRITIONAL PROPERTIES OF HEMP HOLD VALUE-ADDED POTENTIAL

The strength and durability of hemp fibre is well known, leading to a number of textile applications. Hemp oil has features that make it a very attractive ingredient in the cosmetics industry, as well.

Now, thanks to a growing body of research, the nutritional value of hemp seeds is also being proven, adding yet another dimension to the crop's tremendous value-added potential.

The Canadian Hemp Trade Alliance (CHTA) is spearheading a comprehensive research and market development program, the goal of which is to sustain the industry's current rapid growth by establishing and disseminating science-based information about the crop's dietary attributes.

"We're tracking retail sales of hemp products and, overall, the markets here and in the United States have been growing consistently by about 30 per cent per year since 2001," said Gero Leson, an environmental scientist and consultant.

The CHTA received some help in its efforts through the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture's Agriculture Development Fund (ADF), which provided funding towards one of the organization's research initiatives looking at the nutritional characteristics of hemp seeds.

Leson served as a principal investigator for the project. "The ADF project focused on the fatty acid composition of hemp oil, as well as select micro-nutrients, mainly the relevant minerals and vitamins. There were a couple of minor compounds we looked at, too, such as flavonoids and phytosterols," he said.

The research analyzed a number of samples, covering the four commercially relevant hemp varieties grown in Canada and one emerging variety.

According to Leson, the study produced very promising results.

"The first finding was that hemp oil offers a highly balanced fatty acid spectrum, particularly its content of omega-3 fatty acids. It's the balance between omega-3 and omega-6 that makes hemp oil unique and particularly attractive compared to other crops," he said.

"It's also the presence of two 'higher' omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids not commonly present in other natural oilseeds that adds another good quality."

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Another major finding from the research was that hemp seeds offer a veritable bonanza of the nutrients which are often lacking in the common North American diet. The product is a very good source of several minerals, including phosphorous, magnesium, manganese and iron, and a good source of potassium and zinc. Hemp seeds are also good sources of vitamin B1 and folic acid, as well as several phytosterols.

Companion studies co-ordinated by the CHTA have likewise found that hemp protein is very balanced and easily digestible, further enhancing its nutritional characteristics, and, because of these qualities, Leson says hemp stacks up quite well in comparative studies with other nuts and oilseeds.

"Hemp is just a little more of a powerhouse," he stated. "It's higher in most of the relevant nutrients, and its protein quality is higher in general."

Given what he has seen from the crop, Leson feels hemp offers excellent value-added opportunity for the agricultural community.

"I really believe there is great potential in foods because the nutritional composition is just so much in line with a couple of the major trends in nutritional science," he said. "The one concern would be that competition for acreage with other crops, and rising hemp seed prices may put a little dent into those prospects, but I guess that's the same for a number of other commodities. Overall, I think our work is showing that there is very nice potential for the crop to grow."

The fact that commercial hemp farming remains illegal in the United States gives Canada a real leg up to cash in on that potential, Leson adds.

"We think that hemp, as part of a rotation, is going to provide economic benefit and agronomic benefit. It's a niche crop, but one that can be quite profitable," he said.

A copy of the ADF project *Validating and Disseminating the Presence of Micro-Nutrients in Hemp Food Commodities*, #20040612, can be obtained by phoning the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture at (306) 787-5929. It is also available on the ministry's website at www.agriculture.gov.sk.ca, under the "Research" link. Click on *Programs*, then *Agriculture Development Fund*, then *Research Reports Search*.

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STUDENTS PREPARE FOR AGRICULTURAL CAREERS

Students at nine different high schools across Saskatchewan have the opportunity to study agriculture in a classroom setting in preparation for careers in farming or further academics in agricultural study. Agricultural Studies 30 is a Practical and Applied Arts elective offered for credit by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education.

The schools offering Agricultural Studies 30, according to the Ministry of Education's most recent compilation of data, include Beechy, Bengough, Cochrane High School in Regina, Coronach, Davidson, Leader, Rosthern Junior College, Tisdale and Yorkton Regional High School.

"The Agriculture Studies 30 curriculum is taught in modules," said Greg Lawrence, the Practical and Applied Arts Co-ordinator for the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education. "In Ag. 30, there are 15 different modules. The aim of the program is to provide students with the knowledge, skills and abilities to enable them to pursue careers and employment opportunities in value-added or diversified agriculture."

The goals of the course are to provide agricultural awareness, create connections between school and work, encourage entrepreneurial attitudes, raise awareness of the community environment, and develop employability, communication and personal management skills.

The topics within the curriculum include production networks, agricultural technology, marketing, quality assurance, diversification, local perspectives, selecting an enterprise and producing a value-added product.

The author of the curriculum is Karen Rempel. Lawrence explains that, for Practical and Applied Arts credits, curriculum development is contracted to writers with relevant backgrounds in the particular field of study. Once the content of the curriculum is written, it is piloted within a school. Input is also obtained from the Ministry of Education partners that make up the program team for curriculum development. They include the Saskatchewan School Boards Association, Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation and the universities. When the curriculum is determined to meet the needs of the students and teachers, it is approved and made available to schools.

Should students want to apply their new-found agricultural knowledge, there is an optional work-study component that can count for 25 to 50 study hours.

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"Sometimes students that have a particular passion for a topic or a particular background will choose that option," said Lawrence. "Not all students in the class would take advantage of it, but if a student has created a value-added product or wants to get more in-depth on a particular topic, like maybe bison ranching, the teacher has the option to provide that opportunity."

Although some students of Agricultural Studies 30 go on to study the field at the university level, most are rural students intending to pursue careers in farming. The course is not a science course, where one might study soil sciences and matters related to genetics and biology; rather, the curriculum provides a practical career orientation. Regardless of the career path students will choose, Agricultural Studies 30 provides a solid foundation from which to gain an understanding of an industry so important to Saskatchewan.

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MONSANTO OFFERS SCHOLARSHIP FOR RURAL GRADUATES

Monsanto Canada is assisting graduating students from across Canada who plan to pursue post-secondary studies in agriculture or forestry.

The 2008 Monsanto Canada Opportunity Scholarship Program will award 50 to 60 scholarships valued at $1,500 each to students entering their first year of post-secondary education at a recognized Canadian educational institution.

This is the 17th year that Monsanto Canada has offered the scholarship. Trish Jordan from Monsanto's Public Affairs office expects that the program will reach the $1 million mark in 2008.

"It falls under our corporate giving program, which is really meant to help out the communities and the people who help make our business successful," said Jordan . "Because we're an ag. business, and we're successful when farmers are successful, that's what we've chosen to focus on in our giving program."

While the Monsanto Canada Opportunity Scholarship Program is offered nation-wide, Saskatchewan students often fare well. "Saskatchewan would be one of our stronger provinces in terms of where the applications come from, the interest of the students, and obviously the number of applications allocated," said Jordan. She estimates that 25 per cent of scholarship funding is awarded to Saskatchewan students.

In order to qualify, students must come from a farm family or have a forestry background, and must have demonstrated academic excellence, leadership capabilities, and a keen interest and involvement in their rural community.

"The scholarship program falls into one our top priorities, which is science and agricultural education," she stated. "We need the best and the brightest students studying agriculture because that's really our future in terms of rejuvenating our workforce."

She also notes that, as an industry, agriculture is in competition with medicine and engineering to attract the top science students.

"We're looking at this long-term as to 'what does this mean for our industry, and what does it mean for our company' in terms of future employment," she said.

For some students, the scholarship award leads to a summer job with Monsanto Canada. After studies, many return to the company to begin their careers.

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Students interested in pursuing a Monsanto scholarship should submit a completed application, including an essay outlining the area of agriculture or forestry in which they would like to work and why. Application forms will be distributed to high schools, 4-H clubs, provincial and federal agriculture offices, farm retail outlets and seed companies. Forms are also available from Monsanto's CustomCare line at 1-800-667-4944 or can be accessed online at www.monsanto.ca.

The deadline for applications is May 16, 2008. They will be reviewed by an independent panel of judges, and winning entries will be announced in September.

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